



Civil Military Operations & Military Information Support Operations Coordination:

A Non-Kinetic Ballast for Disciplined Counterinsurgency Operations

by Jordan Stern

Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations start with discipline – the discipline to understand and execute a balance between kinetic and non-kinetic operations in shaping the battlespace¹ and specific Target Audiences (TAs). Kinetic operations are actions in the battlespace that involve direct fires, indirect fires and other resources specifically intended to violently kill the enemy. Non-kinetic operations are actions in the battlespace that shape the environment without directly engaging the TA with violent weaponry. Further in non-kinetic operations, the TA is either the enemy or the local populace, not simply the enemy as is the case with kinetic operations. Kinetic and non-kinetic operations are not mutually exclusive; commanders require discipline and deliberate focus in order to balance and coordinate the two in shaping the battlespace in support of the higher commander's intent and U.S. foreign policy objectives. —COIN differs from other civil-military operations both in the methods employed and in the purpose of the undertaking. The purpose of COIN is to build popular support for a government while suppressing or co-opting insurgent movements.”²

The purpose of this article is to provide recommendations for the tactical coordination of Civil Military Operations (CMO) and Military Information Support Operations (MISO) (formerly known as Psychological Operations – PSYOP) through the lens of analyzing current COIN operations in Afghanistan where the clear-hold-build (CHB)³ model is currently applied. This article reviews the purpose of CMO and MISO in support of the commander's intent and how the coordination of the two activities in planning and execution can achieve unity of purpose to significantly enhance the development, governance, and security lines of operation (LOOs) far out of proportion to their individual application. This article concludes by providing a recommendation for future operations and support to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in anticipation of the Coalition Forces' (CF) surge recovery and the

1 Department of Defense definition of battlespace: The environment, factors, and conditions that must be understood to successfully apply combat power, protect the force, or complete the mission. This includes the air, land, sea, space, and the included enemy and friendly forces; facilities; weather; terrain; the electromagnetic spectrum; and the information environment within the operational areas and areas of interest. DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/.

2 U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Counterinsurgency Guide, 13 January 2009.

3 —A clear-hold-build [(CHB)] operation is executed in a specific, high-priority area experiencing overt insurgent operations. [CHB] has the following objectives: 1) Create a secure physical and psychological environment. 2) Establish firm government control of the populace and area. 3) Gain the populace's support.”

U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (Field Manual 3-24), Counterinsurgency, 15 December 2006, p. 5-18.

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 01 NOV 2011		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2011 to 00-00-2011	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Civil Military Operations & Military Information Support Operations Coordination: A Non-Kinetic Ballast for Disciplined Counterinsurgency Operations				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps, Task Force Leatherneck, Expeditionary MISO Detachment 3, Helmand Province, Afghanistan,				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 11	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

2014 International Security Assistance Force⁴ reduction and transition from combat operations to advising, training, and mentoring.

It is important to state that CMO and MISO are capable of supporting operations independently such that their partnership is not a requirement. Rather, CMO and MISO coordination and synchronization within COIN operations may benefit the commander's intent and objectives by complimenting, enhancing and amplifying one another – thereby exerting a synergistic effect across multiple LOOs.

–Civil Affairs [(CA)]⁵ provide the military commander with expertise on the civil component of the operational environment. The commander uses CA's capabilities to analyze and influence the human terrain through specific processes and dedicated resources and personnel. As part of the commander's civil-military operations, CA conducts operations nested within the overall mission and intent. CA significantly helps ensure the legitimacy and credibility of the mission by advising on how to best meet the moral and legal obligations to the people affected by military operations. The key to understanding the role of CA is recognizing the importance of leveraging each relationship between the command and every individual, group, and organization in the operational environment to achieve a desired effect.

The mission of CA forces is to engage and influence the civil populace by planning, executing, and transitioning CA operations in [Marine Corps], joint, interagency, and multinational operations to support commanders in engaging the civil component of their operational environment, in order to enhance civil-military operations or other stated U.S. objectives before, during, or after other military operations.⁶

CA's execution of CMO provides available resources and avenues for non-kinetic targeting and subsequent exploitation of non-kinetic targets, specifically MISO. MISO are an integral part of non-kinetic actions that influence TAs and shape the battlespace for coordinated and synchronized military operations.

[MISO] are planned operations to convey selected truthful information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of their governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of [MISO] is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. [MISO] are a vital part of the broad range of U.S. activities to influence foreign audiences and are the only DOD operations authorized to influence foreign TAs directly through the use of radio, print, and other media.⁷

By analyzing several factors, MISO can identify TAs and behaviors that can potentially adversely affect the commander's intent for the battlespace. Those factors include:

⁴ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is the international force responsible for ~~the~~ [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] (NATO) -led mission to assist GIRoA in the establishment and maintenance of a safe and secure environment, with full engagement of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), in order to extend government authority and influence, thereby facilitating Afghanistan's reconstruction and stability." International Security Assistance Force – NATO – Afghanistan, Mission webpage: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>.

⁵ Civil Affairs (CA) – Forces that plan and execute CMO

⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, Joint CA Operations and Joint Civil-Military Operations Planning Guide, GTA 41-01-004, September 2007.

⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-13, Information Operations, 13 February 2006, p. II-1.

- Political, military, economic and social
- Infrastructure; information
- Physical terrain
- Time

MISO can also determine techniques to influence the desired change of the TA's perception and consequent behavior.

Influence, which is a specified MISO task along with information, involves not only an inherently complex and thorough analysis of the above-listed factors as they pertain to the present conditions, but influence also requires calculating methods to bring about the desired endstate conditions as well. Influence is based upon mutually beneficial recurrent exchange to both the TA and the counterinsurgents, i.e., the expectation on the part of the TA that conforming to the desired behavior will improve their current position or long-term prospects. It is important to note that the TA is composed of rational actors who will always act in their best interests given available information and past experiences as a guide; the TA acts of its own volition. The TA acts with its perceived best interests in mind, based on the information available at the moment of decision. Often the TA believes it is quite acceptable to change its mind if some factor, such as pressure from insurgents, makes it expedient, safer, or more useful to do so. When the TA decides to change its collective mind, it rarely seeks consultation with the U.S. military and does not feel the least bit accountable or wrong concerning its contravention of prior agreements or negotiated contracts. At best, influence operations can be elusory, transitory, and situational. Timing and leverage⁸ are fundamental to seizing the initiative in the information environment and influencing the choice of the TA in order to shape the battlespace. It is incumbent upon the commander to remain mindful that the TA may alter its perception, allegiance or stance in an instant based on its perceptions and rationale.

Radio-in-a-box (RIAB) and loudspeaker broadcasts are two types of media for MISO message dissemination that, when mutually supporting, provide mixed media⁹ to reinforce the influence-message among the TA. Of the two techniques, loudspeaker broadcasts are often disseminated at the tactical-level in Afghanistan in order to influence a TA during patrols. Loudspeaker broadcasting is culturally appropriate in the Muslim-world due to its inherent link to the call-to-prayer and sermons that emanate from mosques multiple times per day. There is a variety of messages that include, but are not limited to, messages from local government officials, public service announcements, warnings of controlled detonations of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and CF and Afghan National Security Forces' (ANSF) actions in the battlespace. The other medium, the expeditionary RIAB, presents many opportunities to broadcast additional audio messages via the FM radio band. However, loudspeaker broadcasts facilitate three advantages in the tactical environment: 1) the TA cannot turn off or change the channel on the loudspeaker broadcast, 2) the MISO team is capable of receiving real-time impact indicators of the message's effects due to the team's vantage point which enables the MISO team to view the TA during the broadcast, and 3) specific TAs in Afghanistan are, for the most part,

⁸ Leverage – Positional advantage; power to act effectively.

⁹ Mixed media – There are audio, visual, and audio-visual message products that MISO use to influence the TA. When more than one medium is used, the technique is known colloquially as mixed media. Often the term mixed media refers to the use of different types of media used to complement each other, such as an audio message used to support a visual message, i.e., a loudspeaker broadcast and a disseminated handbill supporting a like message. In the case of RIAB and loudspeaker broadcasts, despite both techniques disseminating audio message products, the term mixed media applies because each technique mutually supports the other.

hard-wired to listen and give credence to messages broadcasted from a loudspeaker to its cultural significance tied to mosque loudspeakers. RIAB also has advantages. Specifically, RIAB provides diversity of broadcasting content and the fact that it can support consistent messaging across a relatively wide swath of the battlespace.

MISO requires exploitable vulnerabilities of the TA, i.e., leverage, in order to influence (or persuade) the TA that the desired behavior change is appropriate and worthwhile.¹⁰ CMO provide the opportunity for MISO forces to acquire leverage to influence the TA. The TA must believe that the desired behavior change offers the TA a beneficial outcome and is in keeping with its rationale in order to have any prospect of success. U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) understands the requirement for MISO to leverage or exploit vulnerabilities, and USSOCOM supports an environment in which MISO can coordinate with and leverage other capabilities, specifically CMO. Consequently, USSOCOM historically trains its MISO forces and CA at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, often integrating training exercises and syllabi.¹¹

The Marine Corps adopted its own MISO program roughly two years ago, July 1, 2010, when it established the Marine Corps Information Operations Center (MCIOC – now Command) in Quantico, Virginia. Although still in its developing stages, the MISO section¹² at MCIOC deployed twice to Operation Enduring Freedom in support of operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Between these two deployments, the section learned many fundamental lessons about its mission, organization, and support to Marine forces and its ability to leverage actions within the battlespace to support coordinated and synchronized information operations (IO). Of these lessons learned, the one most fundamental to Marine Corps MISO detachments' success has been the relationship with CA and the synchronization of CMO and MISO to support operations – as previously identified and exploited by USSOCOM. Similarly, coordination and mutual support between the deployed CA and MISO detachments is paramount to their overall success and realization of the battlespace owner's intent.

The Marine Corps can find many lessons in USSOCOM's organizational structure and incorporate them into applicable, service-specific CMO and MISO training programs with subsequent integration into exercises such as Enhanced Mojave Viper or the Mission Rehearsal Exercise. Such integration would support the meshing of CMO and MISO Marine Corps Planning Processes into mutually supportive schemes of maneuver and execution. Commanders would be well-served to nest non-kinetic tasks associated with CMO and MISO in support of each LOO, including the security LOO. Nesting non-kinetic tasks with kinetic operations provides balance and continuity to the CHB model of COIN operations.

The MISO detachments that have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom have found leveraging CMO initiatives notably useful in the dissemination of MISO messages and products. CA detachments have found leveraging MISO messages were a force multiplier to their CMO initiatives. Unfortunately, the first time that MISO elements typically coordinated with CA for planning and coordination was on the battlefield in support of forward-deployed

10 Field Manual 3-05.302 Psychological [Military Information Support] Operations – Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, October 2005, “Lines of Persuasion,” p. 6-6.

11 USSOCOM has executive agency for MISO and CA, and therefore is responsible for all doctrine, manning requirements, and training.

12 MCIOC MISO section – The Marine Corps' MISO component currently comprised of just over 30 Marines: four officers and the balance enlisted.

operations – usually on an isolated patrol base. In the standard of train-as-you-fight, non-kinetic operations would greatly benefit from the opportunity for rehearsals and training prior to deployment, inculcating the desired mindset for execution in the battlespace. Further, the synchronization and coordination of CMO and MISO enhance the effectiveness, via balanced COIN operations, of both non-kinetic and kinetic operations. Coordinated training and planning will ultimately support the commander's intent and mission accomplishment when it matters most – immersed in the environs with the TA.

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (Counterinsurgency) addresses the need for military personnel who comprehend the civil dimension of the battlespace, are capable and trained in interagency coordination, and can plan coordinated approaches to complex problems.¹³ As with all MISO missions, the COIN environment requires points of leverage upon which MISO can base influence operations. CMO are intended to facilitate the operations and projects. In that vein, CMO provide a practical point of leverage when conducting humanitarian assistance distribution, medical assistance projects, infrastructure development and the myriad other projects that support the commander's bid for success and achieving the desired endstate. CA provide opportunities to inform and influence the TA by providing goods and services. MISO support to CMO opportunities is facilitated by CA teams that can act as an effective force multiplier through complimentary and synergistic coordination, disseminating information and influence-messages such as handbills and other MISO products. Because CMO have the potential to affect a large TA, it is important for commanders to maintain that MISO, in the absence of an effects operation center (EOC) as at the battalion-level, are the focal point for the coordination of all information and influence activities. At the battalion-level, maintaining MISO as the locus for information and influence initiatives prevents the dissemination of conflicting or inaccurate information and ensures the commander's non-kinetic objectives (via MISO and CA teams) are addressed and supported in all the LOOs through complimentary and reinforcing effects.¹⁴

CMO can be a very effective non-kinetic (leverage) tool, but without coordination and synchronization CMO can create undesired complications. For example, distributing aid or assistance to one TA may disenfranchise another potential TA and ultimately contribute to sectarian conflict. Andrew Wilder recognized this concern in Afghan development in an April 2010 forum at Yale University: —Projects frequently generate grievances, losers as well as winners. Modernization in Afghanistan has often had destabilizing effects, in the 20s under King Amanullah, and during the American/Soviet competition over infrastructure projects in the 70s.”¹⁵ Although unavoidable in certain circumstances, the potential secondary and tertiary effects of CMO and MISO may be mitigated by wargaming such operations prior to execution, just as a planning cell would wargame for standard military planning purposes.¹⁶ Predeployment training is an appropriate venue in which to introduce socio-cultural information and training to CA and MISO forces as well as the conventional units they enable. Coordinated predeployment training between CMO and MISO supports a unified approach to TA analysis – cultural

¹³ U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5 (Field Manual 3-24), *Counterinsurgency*, 15 December 2006.

¹⁴ This article focuses on COIN and its operations and missions; however, tactical MISO is task organized to support both COIN operations and conventional operations. As the Marine Corps transitions to its expeditionary amphibious roots, tactical MISO is capable of supporting the full spectrum of combat operations and military operations other than war.

¹⁵ Yale Afghanistan Forum, —Andrew Wilder: Winning Hearts and Minds?” 4 April 2010:

<http://afghanistanforum.wordpress.com/2010/04/04/andrew-wilder-winning-hearts-and-minds/>.

¹⁶ CMO and MISO coordination nests into the Marine Corps Planning Process: mission analysis, course of action development, course of action war game, course of action comparison and decision, orders development, and transition.

perspectives and norms of the TA as well as the factors, both emotional and physical, which affect the TA and its decision making processes.

One of the many challenges in COIN operations is identifying appropriate points of leverage for non-kinetic operations and further creating sustainability for those operations such that the supported government (in this case GIRoA) can continue similar projects or initiatives without U.S. support or finance. As with many developing countries, self-sufficiency is nearly impossible, particularly when there is a precedent for heavy reliance on international donors for infrastructure development, goods and services. Specifically in the case of U.S. military's financial support to GIRoA, financing civil military based projects, although attractive as a short term solution, may inhibit self-sufficiency in the long term.

In addition, compromise in negotiations¹⁷, a cultural cornerstone taken for granted in democratic societies, is not necessarily fundamental in developing countries, such as Afghanistan. Often the TA assumes (from previous experiences with CF and nongovernmental organizations) that it should receive goods and services for nothing, or very little, in return or that adjacent TAs should receive similar goods and services simultaneously as opposed to sequentially over time. If commanders desire uniform responses from neighboring TAs – for example, two TA populations that eradicate insurgents from their respective communities – mitigating measures should be implemented to avoid conflict or simply different TAs from receiving, or at least perceiving, inequitable treatment at the hands of the battlespace owner. Mitigating measures include approaching the TA as a secular entity by community or district rather than by tribe in order to establish geographic demarcation between TAs – a concept to which the TA may not ordinarily be accustomed. It is critical that CMO and MISO identify and implement mitigating measures within the non-kinetic environment in order to effectively influence the target audience in support the commander's desired endstate.

Despite the Afghan government's inability to duplicate many of the projects sponsored by CA, Marine Corps MISO teams have successfully coordinated CA into CMO initiatives, disseminating information and influencing CMO-specific messages and products in order to directly affect GIRoA's self-sufficiency and the security environment. MISO objectives during CMO generally coincide with two of the missions as outlined by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): 1) Reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, and 2) Facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.^{18 19} Some of the techniques that the commander can use to disseminate MISO audio-products include loudspeaker and RIAB broadcasts as well as predetermined talking points during key leader and local national engagements. These techniques have demonstrated the ability to generate impact indicators that support assessment via measures of effectiveness within the battlespace: villager-provided information on insurgent activity (tips) and increased participation at CF sponsored and local government coordinated shura, i.e., local outreach events in which elders can discuss topics of security, development and governance. The methods above also give CMO a platform from which to push success stories of recent gains in the security, development and governance LOOs to facilitate the perception of a positive image of GIRoA, ANSF and CF in the eyes of the TA.

¹⁷ Negotiations – Discussions aimed at reaching an agreement

¹⁸ International Security Assistance Force – NATO – Afghanistan, Mission webpage: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>.

¹⁹ These three themes are referred to in this article as the Security, Governance, and Development LOOs, respectively as presented in the mission statement.

CMO often interact with outside agencies to execute development projects. It is possible that outside agencies have divergent agendas or standards of work as is often the case with aid workers and locally contracted laborers, respectively. CA and MISO detachments must maintain unity of purpose and unity of effort in order to affect successful projects and influence the TA. Specifically, one of the challenges associated with development projects is the TA's perceptions of aid workers. Andrew Wilder aptly described these obstacles:

[In Helmand, Paktia, Orozgan, Farah, and Balkh Provinces,] perceptions of aid actors [are] mostly negative, with little distinction between [nongovernmental organizations] (NGOs), the military, and government ministries. The common complaints were unmet expectations and broken promises, unfair distributions, corruption, inappropriate or shoddy projects, and lack of consultation. For example, building a road angered those who [*sic*] it bypassed, while the haste and lack of oversight in the construction might mean that it is already crumbling, while the [Provincial Reconstruction Team] (PRT) that built it has already transferred [*sic*] out of the country.²⁰

In order to mitigate Afghans' potentially negative perceptions of aid workers (and CF, as is sometimes the case), CF should conduct MISO influence series and programs to promote and strengthen the perception that the GIRoA officials provide goods and services that have intrinsic value that insurgents are incapable of providing to the local population. Even if the value of the goods and services far exceeds the capabilities of GIRoA to provide, CF should strive to facilitate local government officials as a proxy for the dissemination of those goods and services, i.e., put the Afghan government in the lead from a perception standpoint. Local government involvement promotes the effectiveness of local governance, and mitigates the TA's expectations by delinking CF as a requisite element for local progress and development.

CMO and MISO coordination occurred during combat operations in the Upper Sangin Valley, Sangin District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan in support of 3d Reconnaissance Battalion²¹, Task Force Leatherneck, the battlespace owner in northern Sangin District. CA organized the distribution of Humanitarian Assistance (HA) supplies during the Ramadan holy month. The intent of the HA distribution was to provide the villagers with the impression, through MISO messages and talking points, that the supplies were a gift from GIRoA to the villagers. The desired effect of both CA and MISO actions were to engender the perception that the Sangin District government had a stake in the villagers' welfare with the logical byproduct being strengthening the villagers' trust of and reliance on the district government.

Using helicopter sling loads, 3d Recon Battalion air-dropped over nine tons of HA supplies into an area that was restricted to vehicle access due to a lack of usable roads and the threat of IEDs. Immediately after the supplies arrived, the villagers were unwilling to receive the supplies due to fear that they would be harmed by the insurgents. In this region, the insurgents successfully use murder and intimidation to influence the villagers' interaction with CF. The MISO team supporting the CMO HA supply mission successfully influenced the population with messaging, preplanned and dynamic, broadcasted via loudspeaker and in concert with RIAB. The content of these broadcasts reassured the villagers that proper security was in place for the

²⁰ Yale Afghanistan Forum, "Andrew Wilder: Winning Hearts and Minds?" 4 April 2010: <http://afghanistanforum.wordpress.com/2010/04/04/andrew-wilder-winning-hearts-and-minds/>.

²¹ CMO and MISO coordination is particularly relevant to battlespace owners, a mission atypical for a reconnaissance battalion, but conducted by 3d Reconnaissance Battalion in the Upper Sangin Valley, Sangin District.

distribution of the supplies as well as actively countered insurgent threats and intimidation that were broadcasted from a local mosque. Further, the MISO messages stated that the insurgents had nothing to offer the villagers other than fear and violence. CA partnered with MISO to conduct key leader engagements (KLE) and village outreach (shuras) while operating in the village and living among the population for the duration of the HA supplies distribution mission. The result of the coordinated effort was that all nine tons of supplies were distributed to the villagers by the local elders, many of whom were members of the District Community Council, with the Afghan National Army providing support and security. Once the first straps were lifted from the containers, the nine tons of HA supplies were fully distributed in less than three hours – all of which was done completely by the Afghans.

The Marine Corps MISO team leveraged the success of the CMO supply mission to support continued information and influence efforts.²² The coordinated effort between CMO and MISO also contributed to an increase in the number of tips the battlespace owner received from villagers regarding insurgent activity, positively impacting the overall security environment.²³ There was also a noticeable increase in support for the government officials who reside in the community and who participated in the HA distribution. While it may appear obvious that the villagers would support government officials who assisted and were credited with the distribution of nine tons of HA supplies, this type of event can catalyze a change in perception among the TA as well as adjacent TAs in surrounding villages. Without such an event, support for the host nation government by the villagers would still require an event or chain of events to achieve the desired tipping point.

HA supply missions do not unilaterally shape the battlespace. They require reinforcing actions from the battlespace owner²⁴ including enduring CMO and continuous MISO messaging. HA supply missions provide a platform from which to launch amplified MISO messages, expeditiously support the development and governance LOOs and sustain the effort to divide and separate Afghan civil society from the insurgency; all of which greatly contributes to realizing the commander's security LOO objectives.

The 3d Reconnaissance Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Travis Homiak, stated,

In conducting our operations [in the Upper Sangin Valley], I very deliberately told the Marines to focus on the population first and the enemy second. I will maintain that the firefight is a distraction that must be worked through in order to maintain contact with the population. Our larger mission [was] to disrupt the insurgency, but the method by which we [did] this [was] by interacting with the population, trying to influence them that their better long term prospects lay with the national government. I and my company leadership explained to the Marines that any meaningful interaction we [had] with the people [was] a threat to the insurgents to which they would respond—and then we handed [the insurgents] their ass. Now obviously this wasn't something that the Battalion just accepted, especially the old hands with

²² Coordinated CMO and MISO support collaborative validation by all collection assets of the impact indicators that support the measures of effectiveness associated with non-kinetic operations.

²³ In less than one week following the CMO and MISO coordinated HA supply mission and shura, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion received over 40 tips for IED locations in one village in Sangin District.

²⁴ Battlespace owner – A command or unit assigned to a specific battlespace by a higher command element

several OIF/OEF deployments under their belts. It took a lot of patience and some tenacity on my part, but once the Marines began to see success they were converts.

As was exemplified in the Upper Sangin Valley, CA and MISO forces coordination with each other on outlying patrol bases and successful coordinated efforts in the battlespace have generated positive impact indicators, such as an increase in the number of tips received from villagers (the TA) regarding insurgent activity or increased attendance and participation at local government sponsored or coordinated events; the combined effect supported the development, governance, and security LOOs and respective commander's objectives. Marine Corps CA and MISO forces need to recognize how dynamic and effective the two can be when coordinated and synchronized.

When CA initiatives are not available within the battlespace, MISO messages in support of the security, development and governance LOOs during COIN operations potentially lack resonance with the TA. MISO messages in support of the security, development and governance LOOs require CMO support to lend credence to MISO messaging through tangible actions as well as facilitating outreach through shuras and local development projects. In other words, without CMO and CMO-enabled projects, MISO messages targeting security, development and governance during COIN operations can lack substance and follow-through which is inherently dangerous to CF's credibility in the eyes of the local population. After all, at its most basic, COIN is a contest between the insurgent and the counterinsurgent for legitimacy and influence with the populace as the judge. Vice versa, CA misses an opportunity to broaden impact on the TA when MISO support is not provided to CMO. When MISO teams leverage CMO opportunities, credibility is provided to the steady and consistent messaging that MISO disseminates to the TA. USSOCOM recognized this fact, integrating CMO and MISO training several decades ago. It is important that the Marine Corps follows suit in order to maximize opportunities to exploit non-kinetic operations and shape the battlespace in support of the commander's intent.

The way forward for the CMO and MISO relationship in Afghanistan hinges on two influence initiatives. The first is to continue to divide and separate the Afghan civil society from the insurgency. The second is cooption: influencing the insurgents to leave the insurgency and rejoin Afghan civil society by providing incentives for alternative behaviors and employment. Both are basic tenets of counterinsurgency for which there are various techniques for influencing the desired behavior among the two TAs.

The article's conclusion is a recommendation for future CMO and MISO coordination in the Afghan theater. This recommendation, initiated in Sangin District but never fully exploited, creates an incentive for development as an alternative to supporting the insurgency. The method sets a value (or metric criterion) of security expected for a village over a given period of time and supports the "Inkblot Strategy" through coordination of CMO and MISO with implementation occurring at the tactical-level of the battlespace owner. CMO and MISO coordination at the tactical-level aids the battlespace owner in producing a tipping point scenario in a specific location.

The "Inkblot Strategy" was formalized by the British during the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s and readdressed by David Kilcullen and General David Petraus while theorizing and wargaming solutions to COIN operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paul Buchanan explained the Inkblot Strategy in his article “Two Sides of the Afghan COIN”:

[C]onventional forces roughly divided equally into combat and civilian assistance units fan out into disputed territory to establish secure control of designated localities, then provide humanitarian and nation-building assistance to local populations while driving insurgents further away from areas previously under their control. As each “inkblot” secures its territory the conventional force expands its reach outwards in terms of combat and governance capability, eventually overlapping and saturating the countryside with its presence amid an increasingly supportive population. That denies the insurgent enemy the support and cover it needs to continue effective insurgent combat operations, which forces it to surrender or negotiate a peaceful settlement with US-backed authorities.²⁵

The Inkblot Strategy implemented at the tactical-level is amplified when MISO forces coordinate with CA and support CMO. The following is a recommendation for fully leveraging MISO and CMO in the Inkblot Strategy specific to operations in Afghanistan:

GIRoA, with the assistance of CF, would negotiate projects, only if a given village is able to achieve the desired level of security. For example, if there are no IED attacks or direct fire attacks on CF and ANSF, then the village will receive a fixed amount of money for projects they desire. CA would transfer the money from CF directly to the contractor for specified projects per orders and regulations; however, CA would set the stage to promote the appearance that local GIRoA officials are paying and negotiating the contracts in order to empower local government in that village or district. During the process, the battlespace owner must maintain accountability and supervision of transferred CMO funds due to the potential for corrupt practices among contractors and government officials. For the contract payout, CA would coordinate a shura to facilitate a venue for government officials to appear to transfer the funds under public watch to the project contractor in order to reinforce the government’s involvement and support to local projects.

Once a pattern of security and subsequent projects is established in one village, the program should expand to the surrounding villages in order to further promote incentives for development within a specific district. The purpose of expanding the program is not only to facilitate increased security and development from village to village, but also to encourage and support villages refusing safe haven to insurgents within a district. One assumption in this program is that if a village does not achieve its required level of security during the specified period of time and consequently does not receive monetary support for its projects, then the village will continue to observe ongoing development in adjacent villages. In other words, CF, with a finite and defined timetable for force reduction and withdraw, requires the operational patience to allow an intransigent village to fail and, thereby, serve as a lesson to other villages. The continued observation of one village by another village provides incentive to manifest the desired behavior and improve the village’s security through cooperation with CF and ANSF. Essentially, this application of the Inkblot Strategy involves crafting situations of mutually beneficial exchange between the counterinsurgent and the local population and simultaneously

²⁵ Paul G. Buchanan, Column – “A Word from Afar,” Article – “Two Sides of the Afghan COIN,” June 29, 2010, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/>.

unmasking the insurgent in return for development. Furthermore by including GIRoA in the negotiations and oversight of development projects, local governance legitimacy is enabled.

During the process of incentivizing development, MISO should leverage the development projects as an opportunity to support reintegration and influence insurgents to disarm. In essence, GIRoA sponsored development, underwritten by the CF, becomes more attractive to the would-be insurgent because it offers a better long term outcome rather than continuing with the status quo. Local development, and the jobs they produce, will provide an effective outlet for former and potential insurgents. MISO could further develop messaging associated with a brand²⁶, i.e., “The Builders” for example, in order to positively identify a progressive path forward for individuals who leave the insurgency and work to improve and support villages and the local community. Similar to most MISO messaging, the intent is to create forward progress, or at a minimum the perception thereof, as a means to influence the TA’s behavior. In this program, the targeted behavior is support for development and progressive processes in coordination with security efforts for villages and local communities. An additional benefit to this recommendation is legitimizing the government through coordinated CMO and MISO messages supporting and empowering GIRoA.

Development and security transition of Afghanistan are on the horizon and it is important that CF position GIRoA to control and support the duties associated with sovereignty. If CMO and MISO are not properly coordinated and imprecisely and disjointedly executed within the battlespace, then increasingly scarce funds will be squandered, precious time will be wasted, and intentions and progress will never be realized. The tactical application of the Inkblot Strategy provides a methodology for commanders to successfully plan and execute COIN operations within their respective battlespace. CMO and MISO coordination and cooperation amplify the Inkblot Strategy and provide a rubric for a unity of purpose and a unity of effort across the chain of command. Ultimately, CMO and MISO coordination and cooperation generate tremendous synergy and provide the appropriate and relevant non-kinetic military platform for balanced, disciplined COIN operations during the delicate period of enabling transition.

Capt Jordan C. S. Stern is currently assigned to Task Force Leatherneck as the PSYOP/MISO Planning Officer and as the Expeditionary MISO Detachment 3 (EMD3) Officer-in-Charge. He has served multiple deployments to Afghanistan in various command and staff positions.

This is a single article excerpt of material published in [Small Wars Journal](#).

Published by and COPYRIGHT © 2011, Small Wars Foundation.

Permission is granted to print single copies for personal, non-commercial use. Select non-commercial use is licensed via a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 license per our [Terms of Use](#).

No FACTUAL STATEMENT should be relied upon without further investigation on your part sufficient to satisfy you in your independent judgment that it is true.

Please consider [supporting Small Wars Journal](#).



²⁶ Brand – A trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer [or TA or demographic].